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Thoughts for the Season of Lent.

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THOUGHTS

FOR

THE LENTEN SEASON

BY

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TO OUR DEAR GIRLS OF S. JAMES'
PARISH, BUFFALO, N. Y., THIS LITTLE
BOOK IS AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBED.

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I.

The Meaning of Lent.

LENT is at hand; and as we hear it mentioned, a mental response arises, varying in different minds, which we ourselves may hardly be conscious of making. "Lent! Oh dear, no more parties! Can't we get up something that will take their place?" "I don't believe in fasting; one ought to be good all the year round, and not crowd it all into a few weeks." "It's not for *me;* I haven't much time for fun, anyway; why should I give up that little?" "I wonder what others are going to do; there's L—, she won't do much, and she'll brag of it, too, I know." "Dear me, Lent is coming again, sure enough, and there's that old fault of mine! I must begin to battle with it again. I guess I'll fine myself every time I say anything that I ought not to." "Lent, yes, if one could only have a quiet time, and not have so many interruptions and difficulties. Why should it be made so *hard* to be good?" "I wonder if I cannot bring others to Church with

me this Lent! I mean to try." "I don't want to appear better than my neighbours. There are those good women, the N—s,—they don't fast, and why should I?" "Lent is a remnant of superstition; I want to be large-minded and liberal in *my* views." "Yes, I mean to keep Lent, and go to all the Services that I can. S— asked me the other day about the meaning of Lent, and I couldn't tell her. I will try to know the *reason* of it *this* Lent." "I'm going without butter and sugar; I suppose I can't do any better; there's candy, too, I do love it so,—and cake." "I must finish that story I am reading, and give my leisure during Lent for something more serious." "Oh that *I* might grow more Christ-like this Lent! We do seem to come nearer to Him in these special Services." "Let me see, —I mean to go to every Service, and to every society meeting, and take a mite-box, and go without what I like best at the table, and—and —I will write it all down." "*I'm* too busy now, there's no use *trying* to do anything; when I have more time I will think about it."

Such replies as these may represent, more or less accurately, the feelings of some of the children of the Church toward the claims of Lent. A response there must be of one kind or another. It is not a new thing, to be met with

wonder or curiosity, as it might be by heathens; yet let us strive to receive it again as though we were hearing it for the first time. Do we ever try to realize the deepest reason of all for the call to observe it? Life seems, perhaps, to us, as it does to many, wholly an *outside* thing. Sunshine and blue skies, social visits and dainty surroundings, fill us with delight, which seem the normal state of things that must always be ours. The attractive face, the sweet voice, the graceful manner, the rich apparel, assure us that the *person* is wholly lovely. And the thought of an hour approaching which shall show these fair things as decaying and worthless, is turned from with a feeling of horror and unbelief.

"It doesn't seem to me that I ever *could* DIE," said a beautiful girl, rosy with apparent health, and laughing at her friends as they warned her against an imprudent exposure to inclement weather. Yet it was but a short time before she lay like a faded flower, arrayed for the grave.

However, let us look at all this earthly loveliness, not as we fondly will it to be, but as it really is, the shadow of an eternal substance. This fair earth, beautiful in summer verdure, fragrant with flowers, musical with tinkling waterfalls and the singing of birds; again, dazzling in its drapery of unsullied snow; now

soothing us in its quiet valleys to rest, or raising us to heroic thoughts and desires by its sterner features, its majestic mountain tops, which lead our eyes to the yet more beautiful o'erarching skies; the changing seasons; the nights and days; yes, our own wonderful bodies, too—all are parables, object lessons, given us to study for a while, that we may learn something of the meaning of heavenly and imperishable things.

"Two worlds are ours; 'tis only *sin*
Forbids us to descry
The mystic heaven and earth within,
Plain as the sea and sky."*

This body of ours, so complex, and nicely adapted for its purpose, which, like the natural world around us, forces a thoughtful and unprejudiced mind to believe in an intelligent, beneficent, and almighty Creator, encloses a far more wonderful being within.

We have known these two beings so long as intimately united, we do not know how to think of them as separate. Yet we *shall* know them apart from each other for a time, until it pleases GOD to raise from that outer being a spiritual body to perfect the joy of the indwelling soul. The beauty of *that* body, we

* Keble.

may be sure, will truly represent the character of the soul which inhabits it.

I read lately a little story of a young missionary, a noble soul, but deformed in body and distorted in feature, who met on a boat a girl so radiantly beautiful that she seemed something angelic. To her surprise, upon being introduced to her, he suggested that her presence amongst the sick and degraded would help them to realize and desire heavenly things. She inwardly revolted from the idea, and was thinking how she could best leave him, when they noticed a commotion at the other end of the boat. A larger vessel had struck it, and it began to sink rapidly. Small boats were hastily lowered, and into one of these the girl's father placed her. Finally, all but two had been rescued, the missionary and a poor negro woman. There was room in the last boat for only one more. Carefully the young man lowered the weeping negress into the vacant place; then he turned and gazed up into heaven. The girl saw and never forgot that last look as the boat went down. The repulsive face was transfigured by the glorious soul-beauty which shone in it. A terrible doubt came over her as to whether her own loveliness, after all, was anything more than a mask which death would utterly destroy.

How beautiful this human nature must have

been in Eden, the perfect body a truthful expression of the perfect soul! We try to believe that it is still the same. We look for the friend of our soul in one of lovely form and face, and feel ourselves wronged when we find that all is imperfect within, and fails to fulfil our ideal. The first act of disobedience in the Garden was a discord in the eternal harmony, and henceforth the instrument, man, was warped, which had heretofore responded in act, as well as intention, to the slightest intimation of the Master's will. Human nature now became lame in walking righteously, blind to its real good, and weak in fulfilling a right intention.

What we resent in others, we can see, if we will, in ourselves. We strive and we fail, we will and we are overcome, we rise and we fall. How wholly disheartening! What can we do with ourselves but try to believe that we are all right, after all, as good as others, and refuse to think more about it? Many do this, but let not *us* so fail of a great heaven of consolation.

There is One who is perfect, and that is GOD. He has all in Himself that our nature hungers for. Infinite, almighty, incomparable in wisdom, in glory, and beauty, He yet pities and yearns over that creature of His which had set at naught His gracious will. Nothing but the

most costly sacrifice would save this fallen nature, but *that* an Infinite Love freely gave.

> "Out of the bosom of His love He spares,
> The Father spares the Son, for thee to die."

The Son of GOD laid aside the glory which He had with His Father "before the world was," and likewise pitying, yearning, loving, He came to this one small world of His, to take our nature upon Him, with all that it can mean of weariness, pain, and sorrow, and death. We do not read that He was gay, even that He smiled; but we do know that He "wept," and "was troubled in spirit." And with the final pangs of death He bought all mankind for His own, that all who would, might, by union with Him in Baptism and His Holy Supper, partake of His risen Life.

What was the change from death to life which the Redeemer had wrought? A germ of spiritual life planted in the infant soul in Baptism; a guardian angel given to watch over the newly born and cleansed; Christ's Church nursing the tiny seed into growth; and then a larger gift of spiritual strength in Confirmation; the growing, striving, longing soul thereafter to be constantly fed with His own Body and Blood, His Life, that a new and more glorious being might arise from the ruined state in which He found it, like

the fabled phœnix, from whose ashes arose another of its kind, more beautiful and vigorous than its parent. Henceforth to the Christian believer this earthly life and all its surroundings were wholly changed. A Father's hand supplied the daily portion for each one of His children, and so ordered every circumstance as best to mould and shape a lovely and enduring character, meet for sons and daughters of the King.

A Christian poetess well expresses the filial feeling of the child:

"I love to think that God appoints
My portion day by day;
Events of life are in His hand,
And I would only say
Appoint them in Thine own good time,
And in Thine own best way.
All things shall mingle for my good,
I would not change them if I could,
Nor alter the decree.
Thou art above, and I below;
Thy will be done; and even so,
For so it pleaseth Thee." *

We have often watched the effect of sunlight, and noticed how it brings out color and beauty from even a barren landscape, and bathes the most common object with a loveliness that is not its own. So Christ, the Sun of Righteous-

* Mrs. Waring.

ness, has transfigured this common life of ours, and made it beautiful and full of meaning.

"Consider it
(This outer world we tread on) as a harp,—
A gracious instrument, on whose fair strings
We learn those airs we shall be set to play
When mortal hours are ended. Let the wings,
Man, of thy spirit, move on it as wind,
And draw forth melody. Why shouldst thou yet
Lie grovelling? More is won than e'er was lost:
Inherit. Let thy day be to thy night
A teller of good tidings. Let thy praise
Go up as birds go up, that, when they wake,
Shake off the dew, and soar.
Art tired?
There is a rest remaining. Hast thou sinned?
There is a Sacrifice. Lift up thy head!
The lovely world, and the over-world alike,
Ring with a song eterne, a happy rede,
'Thy Father loves thee.'" *

Multitudes who had existed in passive endurance of suffering from poverty and oppression, grasped at the Divine Hope, and gladly obeyed the call; those also who had tried all the good which this world had to offer, and were unsatisfied. Faith in the Divine promise of a future life, a faith unknown to the heathen world, enabled them to count as a trifle the loss of all earthly things. While they had them, they used them for Christ's honour, with thanksgiving;

* Jean Ingelow.

when they were withheld, they esteemed them as without value, and imprisonment and death were even courted for His sake. And these things are true, not of the early believers alone. All that the world has since known of Christian courage and patient endurance and loving self-sacrifice were and are fruits of that Divine Life within, which we call the grace of GOD.

Strange that there should ever be those who, while enjoying the blessings of Christianity, so dearly purchased, question the need, and drearily say, "I do not *know* whether there *be* a future life." Without hesitation we accept the word of one whose character we have reason to think upright, and worthy of our respect and love. What is the character of Jesus Christ? It stands out alone, unapproachable throughout all the ages. "I do always those things that please" "the Father." Of whom else could anything like this be asserted, that, "as He spake these words, many believed on Him"? The assumption of perfect blamelessness would be quickly disproved in any one else; but even His enemies have been forced to acknowledge that His was a spotless life, and one after another has declared himself conquered by this Man.

What are His words concerning Himself? "I speak that which I have seen with My Father." "I came down from Heaven, . . .

that every one that seeth the Son, and believeth on Him, may have everlasting life, and I will raise him up at the last day." "In my Father's house are many mansions. . . . I go to prepare a place for you." "Behold, I tell you the truth." "If it were *not* so, I would have told you." He says of His own words, "They are spirit and they are life." "My words shall not pass away." Those earthly friends in whom we are so willing to place our confidence *may* fail us, their words *may* not be true, their promises may *not* be fulfilled. But Christ cannot disappoint us. He is wholly to be believed, entirely to be trusted, and worthy of our most devoted love.

The early Christians showed their love and zeal by the care which they took that the memory of the sacred events should be preserved. They had the authority of the Jewish Church for the institution of times and seasons, and they desired to commemorate a greater deliverance than that from the bondage of Egypt. We can see by the light of history how the Christian observances grew out of, and were the completion or fulfilment of, those of the elder Church. Our Lord had said, "When the Bridegroom shall be taken away, then shall they fast." From the first the Pascha, or Quadragesimal Fast, was generally observed, but including forty *hours* only, the time between the Crucifixion and Resurrec-

tion. It gradually increased in length, some Churches keeping three weeks, some six, and, where they were accustomed to keep Saturday as a festival day, even seven weeks were observed. This explains the origin of the Septuagesima, Sexagesima, and Quinquagesima Sundays. The Wednesday and Friday of every week were also observed as fast-days, in remembrance of Christ's betrayal and crucifixion. The precise number of forty days was introduced about the beginning of the seventh century; and from that time to this it has been duly and universally observed, recalling multitudes of GOD'S children from forgetfulness, indifference, and worldliness, to renewed penitence and a more earnest striving to follow in the footsteps of the Master. It is a noble company which we are now called upon to join in the Lenten Fast. Shall we not heartily respond, realizing in some degree, at least, the presence of that "cloud of witnesses" who gaze with intense sympathy on *our* warfare against the world, the flesh, and the devil?

"Welcome, dear Feast of Lent; who loves not thee,
He loves not temperance nor authority,
But is composed of passion.
The Scriptures bid us fast; the Church says *now*.
Give to thy Mother what thou wouldst allow
To every corporation."

"Who goeth in the way which Christ hath gone,
Is much more sure to meet with Him, than one
That travelleth by-ways.
Perhaps my Lord, though He be far before,
May turn and take me by the hand, and more,
May strengthen my decays." *

* Herbert.

II.

How to keep Lent well.

" Is this a fast to keep
The larder leane
And cleane
From fat of veales and sheep?

" Is it to quit the dish
Of flesh, yet still
To fill
The platter high with fish?

" Is it to fast an houre,
Or ragged go,
Or show
A downcast look and sour?

" No ; 'tis a fast to dole
Thy sheaf of wheat,
And meat,
Unto the hungry soule.

" It is to fast from strife,
From old debate
And hate :
To circumcise thy life.

" To show a heart grief-rent,
To starve thy sin,
Not bin ;
And that's to keep thy Lent."

WE know that the forty days of Lent are a part of the heritage which has come to us through much suffering and conflict. It should be a precious season to us. But this is such a busy age, and we ourselves are so busy, that the time may slip away while we are planning how to use it. It was for this reason that our mother Church retained the three preceding weeks, Septuagesima, Sexagesima, and Quinquagesima (which had been kept in some places before uniformity had been secured), as a time of preparation, in which one might form well-arranged plans for profiting by it. Perhaps it would be well to consult Church History, and see what use was made of it by those who established the custom. The sacred events were so fresh in the minds of those Christians who lived in the Apostolic age, that they could not help remembering them with reverential love and sorrow during the forty hours which included the time from the Crucifixion to the Resurrection Morn. And though every other Saturday in the year was kept as a festival, Easter Even, as well as Good Friday, was kept by the whole Church as a fast until cock-crowing on the morning of the Resurrection; and the night was spent as a vigil, religious assemblies being held and Divine Services performed. It was also a night specially set apart for Bap-

tisms. This is ordered in the writings known as the Apostolical Constitutions, which were compiled before the year 325 A.D. The following is an extract:

"The Fast of Lent is to be observed by you as containing a memorial of our Lord's mode of life. But let this solemnity be observed before the Fast of the Passover. He charged us Himself to fast these six days, on account of the impiety of the Jews, commanding us to bewail over them. He commanded us to fast on the fourth and sixth days of the week; the former on account of His being betrayed, and the latter on account of His passion. Do you therefore fast on the days of the Passover, beginning from the second day of the week, until the preparation and the Sabbath, six days, making use of only bread and salt and herbs, and water for your drink. And do you abstain on these days from wine and flesh, for they are days of lamentation, and not of feasting. Do ye who are able, fast the day of the preparation (Friday) and the Sabbath Day entirely, eating nothing till the cock-crowing of the night; but if any one is not able to join them both together, at least let him observe the Sabbath Day. For the Lord says, speaking of Himself, 'When the Bridegroom shall be taken away from them, in those days shall they fast.'"

As was before stated, the time was gradually lengthened, and at the beginning of the seventh century a uniform practice secured, in order to revive the piety of the earliest days of the Church; also to give a lengthened season of preparation for the Easter Communion, the practice of frequent Communion having declined, owing to the growing worldliness of the Church. This Season was also used in preparing persons for Baptism, and penitents to be again received into communion, from which they had been cut off by the discipline of the Church. Every Christian was allowed to decide for themselves what degree and what kind of fasting they should practise.

S. Chrysostom intimates that a great liberty was allowed men in regard to their infirmities, and that they were left in a great measure to fast at their own discretion. "Let no one," says he, "place his confidence in fasting only, if he continues in his sins without reforming. For it may be that one who fasts not at all may obtain pardon, if he has the excuse of bodily infirmity; but he that does not correct his sins can have no excuse. Thou hast not fasted by reason of the weakness of thy body; but why art thou not reconciled to thy enemies? Canst thou pretend bodily infirmity here?"

Some abstained from all animal food, others

ate fish, others nothing but dry bread. But the general rule was the fast until evening, then partaking of any kind of food. In many of the larger Churches, religious Services were held every day during the Season, and on the Sabbath and Lord's Day frequent Communions. The celebration of festivals, birthdays, and marriages during Lent was forbidden, also all public games and stage plays. "During the Great, or Passion, Week, special and abundant acts of kindness and charity were shown toward the poor and distressed brethren. It was also a time of great rest and liberty to servants. By the imperial laws, after the state became Christian, all proceedings at law, civil or criminal, were suspended, and a general pardon bestowed upon debtors and criminals. Passion Day, or Good Friday, was observed with peculiar solemnity. Besides the public worship, it was the special time for reconciling penitents and granting them absolution." *

But were there not many fanatics in those early days? Yes; every great movement has its extremes, which are evidences of its surplus of vitality. In the Church of to-day there is the extreme of ritualistic practice, and the opposite extreme of lightly esteeming the Church's laws and Ministry and Sacraments. As in days of

* Bingham's Antiquities.

persecution Christians were obliged to hide in caves of the earth, and were frequently forced to go without food, so afterward men retired of choice to these hiding-places, thinking to lead there a holier life. It would be strange, indeed, if there were not some who carried this idea to excess. S. Symeon Stylites is, perhaps, the most noted of these extremists, although there were many who followed his example. He is said to have lived for thirty-seven years upon the top of a pillar only one yard across, which he exchanged for one after another of greater height, until he was elevated forty-four feet above the ground. It is also stated that during the last year of his life he stood on one foot as a penance; but we may regard this feat as an embroidery of the facts concerning him.

We can readily see a great difference between such useless acts as these (if, indeed, they were not much worse than useless) and the simple earnestness of the earliest believers. Our own age presents such a striking contrast to anything of this kind! We are a luxurious, self-indulgent people, averse to the endurance of hardship, self-denial, and suffering. We are not Spartans; we are *not* (though we may think of some noble exceptions to the rule) beings of heroic faith. But we belong to the same redeemed humanity, and GOD'S grace can make

us equal to whatever He may require of us. There may be good reasons why we cannot go as far in abstaining from food as they ordinarily did. We live in a colder country, where the climate is often severe, and in an age of great activity, both of which are wearing upon our bodily and mental strength.

But there is one rule which we can all easily apply in regard to food. We can go without delicacies, sweets, which we do not take to nourish our bodies, but to gratify our palates. Does any one think that they *could* go without so easily that it is not worth while to make the attempt? Try a fixed rule not to touch candy, cake, or desserts during Lent, and see for yourselves if it is not a far more difficult thing than you may have thought, to carry it out faithfully.

There is a little story related of two soldiers, a general and a corporal in the same regiment, who were inseparable friends, and usually acted as one person; but sometimes the general had high aims and desires, and wise measures that he wished to carry out, in which he met with much resistance from the corporal. He felt that this was not a right state of things, and that he was the one who ought to rule. He loved the corporal too tenderly to wish to punish him for insubordination, and tried to think

of some plan to reduce him to obedience without exciting his active opposition. About this time he became much interested in the subject of missions, and concluded to propose a retrenchment in good things to eat, in order that a considerable sum might be given as their joint offering to this object. The corporal listened attentively to the plan, and, as he was always warm-hearted, he readily agreed to do his part, in giving up sugar in every form for a certain length of time. He did not imagine that he cared much for it, but then he was a thoughtless fellow. He also loved his ease; for the very next morning he was late in arising, and when he came into the breakfast-room, the cook placed before him delicious pancakes with a special treat of new maple syrup poured over them. His usually pleasant face was clouded as he remembered his promise, and he said, "No, thank you," quite crossly, as he helped himself instead to bread and milk. However, a good run out of doors restored his spirits and quickened his appetite. On his return he found a friend eating chocolate drops, who offered him some. They looked so tempting that he took one. Just then that *promise* occurred to him. He hesitated a moment, then wondered what the friend who had offered them would think, which settled the matter, and in went the chocolate,

and several others followed it. So the little corporal, who was no coward when an outward foe assailed him, was vanquished by this slight temptation. It is just to the general, however, to say that he talked very seriously to the corporal of the evil result which would follow if he could not subdue his appetites; and many more attempts were made, which gradually rendered the corporal a strong helper to his general in resisting sin and building up a Christian character.

Perhaps we may have guessed already that as the word corporal means body, so the two soldiers represent our lower and higher natures. The body is not to be destroyed, but trained to be the willing servant and helper of the soul. For this purpose it is important that its natural desires should be guided and governed by the soul.

A writer on evolution has said: "In its rude beginnings, the soul life was but an appendage to the body; in fully developed humanity, the body is but the vehicle for the soul."

We see many a sad illustration of the lower nature gaining the ascendancy in boys who cannot leave off smoking cigarettes; in men who cannot pass the open door of a saloon without going in to take a drink. We must also think of the women, as well as the men, who are

slaves to the thirst for strong drink, to the opium habit, or to lust. Do we not know that there are also those who could not live without their strong tea or coffee; and others who spend in dainties an amount which would aid greatly in providing food, clothes, and instruction for the destitute in body and soul? If children were trained to the right observance of the Season of Lent, they would learn the lesson of self-control so thoroughly, that the passing of fifty saloons would be no temptation to enter one of them. And this self-control would proceed from a motive which would keep one steadfast,—a religious principle, which has an Almighty strength to rest upon.

There is, then, "a sweet reasonableness" in laying aside the little self-indulgences, in food and dress and light reading and amusements, at a time when we are trying to know and to govern ourselves. They tend to make us dull to spiritual things, pleased with ourselves, and full of wandering fancies which drive away serious thoughts.

So far as our duties towards others will allow, we should, in Lent, turn away from outward things, and make a study of this inner person of ours. And to do this, we must take some time every day. It may be short, but if it is only a quarter of an hour in the morning, and

the same at night, it ought to be made a regular rule.

> "Sum up at night what thou hast done by day;
> And in the morning, what thou hast to do.
> Dress and undress thy soul: mark the decay
> And growth of it: if with thy watch, that too
> Be down, then wind up both; since we shall be
> Most surely judged, make thy accounts agree." *

The old saying, "Where there's a will there's a way," will apply here. The time gained by rising a little earlier in the morning, a solitary walk or ride, silence in the midst of a crowd of busy talkers, will make an opportunity, if we can get no other, to raise our hearts to GOD, and secure the disengaged mind which we need. We read that S. Paul "was minded to go afoot" when he wished to be alone. S. Chrysostom says: "Is it not *thy* business to read the Scriptures because thou art distracted with a multitude of other cares? It belongs to thee more than to others who have not so much need of the help of the Holy Scriptures." Martin Luther said that he was so distracted by many duties that he could not bear the burden without taking *three hours* daily for prayer and meditation. We may wonder how he could get so much time for it; but it was probably taken from the hours of sleep.

* Herbert.

The constant prayer, "O GOD, show me myself," and the daily effort to concentrate our thoughts, will gradually reveal to us in ourselves some of those traits which we see so quickly in others. "He that has learned to know himself," says an old writer, "hath acquired a better knowledge than if the courses of the stars had engaged his thoughts." The questions, "Why am I here?" "Who placed me here?" "Whither am I tending?" call for an answer from our own souls as they did and will from all mankind. Meditation naturally leads to prayer, that avenue of approach to GOD which is never closed against us. As we draw nigh to GOD, He will draw nigh to us, and give us strength and peace. I give here, in a somewhat condensed form, the thoughts of another upon this subject.*

If the privilege of prayer were accorded to us only once in a number of years, we should long for the opportunity; we should prepare our petitions with great care and thought, and lay all our plans in reference to the precious occasion. It would be to us like the walled-up doorway in the vestibule of St. Peter's at Rome, which is opened only four times during a century, the event being marked with imposing

* Professor Phelps; from Miss Guernsey's "Lent in Earnest."

ceremonies by the Pope and his Cardinals, a wondering multitude following them through the new entrance for the first, and perhaps for the last, time.

Because the opportunity of prayer is as free as the air that we breathe, we do not reflect upon the marvellous condescension of the great GOD in allowing His creatures such easy access to Him. I quote from a writer of the last century the following incident: "'Why, then,' said the doctor, 'I will carry you to one of the greatest and highest entertainments in the world. Suppose I should carry you to court. Aye, suppose I should have interest enough to introduce you into the presence.' 'You are jesting, dear sir,' cries Amelia. 'Indeed, I am serious,' answered the doctor. 'I will introduce you into that Presence compared to whom the greatest emperor on the earth is many millions of degrees meaner than the most contemptible reptile is to him. What entertainment can there be to a rational being equal to this? Was not the taste of mankind most wretchedly depraved, where would the vain man find an honour, or where would the lover of pleasure propose so adequate an object as divine worship? With what ecstasy must the contemplation of being admitted to such a Presence fill the mind! The pitiful courts of princes are

open to few, and to those, only at particular seasons; but from this glorious and gracious Presence we are none of us, and at no time, excluded.' The doctor was proceeding thus, when the servant returned, saying the coaches were ready; and the whole company, with the greatest alacrity, attended the doctor to St. James's Church."

But can we be certain that GOD will answer our prayers? He has *promised* to do so, and we must leave to Him the time and manner of answering them. Is He not wiser and more loving than we are? Every earnest Christian could tell of answers to his prayers. From many which have been printed, I select a very remarkable instance, showing great faith in the petitioner. George Mueller, of Bristol, England, saw many neglected children whom his compassionate heart yearned over, and his great desire was to found an orphanage in which he might be able to support three hundred of them. He believed that GOD could and would enable him to accomplish this, if he depended solely upon His help. He resolved to ask no human being for money; but he prayed earnestly, incessantly, for this one thing. The answer came. He received from various sources unexpected funds sufficient to complete the work. But other needy children appealed

to him in such numbers that he had recourse again and again to the help of the Almighty, with the result that a second and third orphanage (the three buildings accommodating a thousand children) were built and maintained, without a request for any human aid.

III.

Repentance and Faith.

"O wad some power the giftie gie us,
To see oursels as ithers see us!"

So wrote the poet Burns. It would be a very disinterested friend, or else an enemy who wished to wound us in a tender spot, who would venture to show us any evil in ourselves. When a schoolgirl, I remember making a compact with some dear companions to tell the faults which we could see in each other. However, when it came to the point, I could not summon up courage enough to do so, and do not remember that the others mentioned more than the slightest of failings. Our physical frame is a type of the moral and spiritual. Certain diseases have always been considered as striking types of sin: palsy, which renders the body helpless; and leprosy, which gradually eats out the soundness and purity of the flesh. A diseased part of the body is usually very sensitive to the touch, and we dread the probe; so it is with the spiritual nature affected by sin. I once

knew a girl (not brought up in the Church, however) who declared that it was some years since she had committed a sin. My cousin, who was an old acquaintance of hers, afterward made the comment: "I suppose she doesn't think that being so angry that she cannot speak to one who has offended her *is* a *sin*."

We may think that we do not wish to be hypocrites, and that we really cannot tell what we have thought, said, or done that is very wrong. However, we *can* look at the costly Sacrifice which was necessary to redeem each one of us, until we learn more of ourselves. The result of looking at our spiritual nature with constant prayer that we may know ourselves, naturally leads to *repentance*. We do not need to learn its definition, and to be instructed as to its meaning. GOD Himself has taught us by many an object lesson, from infancy up to mature years. The untruth, anger, greediness, or self-will of childhood; the reproach of a conscience yet tender, oppressed by the feeling that the parent who loved us had been made to suffer by our naughtiness, yet must punish us to make us better; the fear of the punishment; the sorrow which followed; the confession and asking for forgiveness; the promise not to do so again; the love which restored us so gladly to favour and happiness—all these,

unconsciously to ourselves, have taught us over and over again what repentance toward GOD meant, before we could define the word. We are wonderfully made; we are not machines to do His will, whether *we* will or no. GOD is very patient with the work of His hands. His arms are ever open to receive us. He calls, again and again, by gentle blessings, by sharp afflictions, "Return, return;" but He will not *force* us to come. The Lord Jesus breaks down no barrier between Himself and us which we do not *wish* to have removed.

Still He stands at the door and knocks. The watching angels wait for our response, and perhaps our guardian angel helps on, in viewless ways, the work of repentance which is slowly progressing within us. For it is a lifelong work. The "joy in the presence of the angels of GOD over one sinner that repenteth" is not confined to one who is a great sinner in the estimation of men.

Our mother Church bids *all* her children to pray for "true repentance," and to say, "I will arise and go to my Father." The greatest saints, who have known the most of the workings of their own hearts, feel most deeply their sinfulness. "Alas!" says good Bishop Hall, "our repentance needs to be repented of." The test of repentance is amendment. We are

to be "dead to sin, and renewed in the spirit of our minds."

It is related of one of the worthiest of the ancients, that, after his conversion, on beholding one of his former evil companions approaching him, he fled. His former intimate called after him, "Whither fliest thou? It is *I!*" Without slackening his speed he returned answer, "But *I* am not *I!*" Luther called upon sinners, as the first effort in the direction of repentance, to go back to their Baptism and stand upon that before GOD. We are not only the creatures of His hand, but we are in covenant relation to Him, and have the special claim of children adopted into His family. This was done for most of us before we were conscious of the high privilege.

The Repentance and Faith were promised then which we were afterward to desire and fulfil. Both are the gift of GOD, but neither is to be attained without effort on our part. What, are we to blame, if we cannot believe? Yes, if we are wilfully blind; if we have not sought to nurse and strengthen our feeble faith into a strong and healthy growth, by the use of all the means which GOD has given us—prayer, the study of GOD'S Holy Word, and the frequent reception of the Holy Communion. Although our sponsors promise "both" for us,

GOD Himself has taught us the meaning of faith, as of repentance, in our childhood. The father and mother represent to the child wisdom and power and guardian care and guidance. With them he is safe from every evil, sure of everything that he needs. His faith in them is unbounded. Their actions are his example, their sympathy his inspiration, their love his best reward. The little child in his mother's arms, says a writer, teaches us how we should depend upon GOD. He looks out on the world, smiling and happy, interested in what is going on, though only partly understanding it; but at a sudden noise or disturbance, he instantly and instinctively turns round and clings to his mother. The better the parents are, the more perfectly do they represent GOD to the child, and prepare him to live a life of faith. S. Francis de Sales tells us that "there are birds which hatch the eggs of other birds of the same species, and rear a brood which is not their own; but when a bird thus reared, happens to hear the cry of its own real mother, by a marvellous operation of instinct it flies toward her, and takes its place under her wings. Even so a human heart, though reared and nourished under the wings of Nature, amidst the material and transitory objects of the earth, yet no sooner hears a true representation of the Heavenly

Father than it feels drawn toward Him by a spiritual instinct, the operation of which shows that it was made for GOD originally, and that in GOD only can it find rest." We cannot live a life of faith if we are absorbed in the things of this world; if, like the man with the muck-rake in Bunyan's parable, we are searching for earthly treasure so intently that we cannot find time to raise our eyes and behold the angel with the golden crown. The saints of GOD, which the Holy Scriptures give as our examples of faith, were strangers and pilgrims on the earth, for they looked for a better country—a heavenly.

Arch-Bishop Trench, in one of his poems, gives a striking thought of S. Augustine's, which we may vary and enlarge upon with profit. The voyager upon life's sea makes his temporary abode in the ship as pleasant as possible, furnishing his cabin with many comforts and conveniences, perhaps even decorating it with beautiful pictures and silken hangings; also inventing amusements and occupations, that the days of passage may not be wearisome. But if the traveller were to become so absorbed in the attractive things with which he had surrounded himself; so intent on the work of embroidering its hangings, or planning to enlarge and enrich it; or so much interested in the games and songs which form a part of its

daily pleasures that he should forget the land toward which he was hastening, and be terrified and dismayed at the news that the haven was in sight, and a boat approaching to take him ashore, should we not exclaim, "What blindness! What folly!" Yet are we not in danger of passing "the time of our sojourning here" in much the same manner? Oh for the eyes of faith "to take true measure of our eternal treasure"! We need to pray, as the Apostles did, "Lord, increase our faith," and He will strengthen its feeble growth, and make it such as shall remove mountains of unbelief.

"What thou of GOD and of thyself dost know,
So know that none can force thee to forego;
For ah! his knowledge is a worthless art,
Which forming of himself no vital part,
The foremost man he meets with readier skill
In sleight of words, can rob him of at will.
Faith feels not of her lore more sure nor less,
If all the world deny it or confess:
Did the whole world exclaim, 'Like Solomon,
Thou sittest high on Wisdom's noblest throne,'
She would not, than before, be surer then,
Nor draw more courage from the assent of men.
Or did the whole world cry, 'O fond and vain!
What idle dream is this which haunts thy brain?'
To the whole world Faith boldly would reply,
'The whole world can, but I can never, lie.'"*

* Trench.

In these days there are many who doubt what they had been brought up to believe. They think that there is nothing certain. There are so many attacks upon "the Faith once delivered to the Saints" that nothing is left to rest upon; and not being well "grounded and settled," they are "carried about with every wind" of opposition.

The so-called Higher Criticism of the Holy Scriptures (we may remember for our comfort) is, after all, only a conjecture. Its methods applied to any other writings would demolish them, and can be shown to be absurd in many instances. Much of the power of investigators who seek to disseminate the results they have arrived at, comes from their habit of stating as settled facts the theories which they have formed. For instance, they have stated that "it is now certain that Moses was not the author of the Pentateuch." Yet within the past few years these scholars have changed their convictions, and now seem to agree that it was written by *some* Moses, although a few still claim not by Moses the Law-giver. "All scholars are agreed upon this," is the beginning of another statement, upon which one signing himself "Senex" to a late article published in "The Churchman" makes this comment: "When this expression is sifted, we find that 'all schol-

ars' mean the writer and a few who agree with him." One is reminded of the printed words of a prominent artist, that "no one now believes in angels." Is such a statement true, when the Bible is full of the accounts of their ministries, and millions of Christians accept it as the Truth? What kind of a *character* is that which would deliberately make such an assertion? Who are the persons who ask from us so much confidence in themselves? Are they those who have shown by their lives of holiness and self-denial their love toward GOD and man? I will let Mrs. Oliphant, a well-known English writer, answer the question for us.

"We are told that the successive histories [of the Old Testament], having now been exposed to the researches of modern criticism, have been found to be untrustworthy, and that all our views of historical truth, and all our faith in ancient and sacred personages, must be given up. The labours of half a dozen learned Germans, working by no light except that of their own genius, upon the most ancient literature in the world, amid all the difficulties attending research in a language which contains nothing else with which to compare or collate the works under examination, and belonging to a period when language was being formed, and when science, either in that or in any other region,

did not exist, form the sole standing-ground for this demand. It is a blind confidence which is required by them, not an intelligent faith. When we say that these writers are inspired by dubious motives, we mean that they are moved by a foregone conclusion, the determined conviction that everything which is based on supernatural influences, and records communications between GOD and man, is necessarily untrue; which is a very large assumption to begin with. There are but two ways which I can recognise in literature, of producing a recognisable and genuine human being: the one is by the tale of his life as it happened; the other is by the effort of genius conceiving and creating such a man, under great laws of truth to nature, which cannot be transgressed. And the history of the Bible is, above all things, biographical, the records of individual lives. These men are no things of shreds and patches, but human beings far more clearly distinguishable, far more real, than the moles of erudition who poke about the roots of all history, and endeavour to make the world as blind as themselves. I have no claim to set myself forth as one who has any authority in these matters, but I may say on my own part, what every individual has a right to say, that to transfer my faith and confidence from the writers of the Old Testament to the Herrn

Wellhausen, Kuenen, etc., would seem to me the wildest insanity. Moses I know and Samuel I know, but who are these ?''

In a biographical sketch of a prominent English layman, George Romanes, published by S. Andrew's Brotherhood, it is noted that he was one who, from the results of his studies in science, became an unbeliever. He was a writer of many works on scientific subjects. But with increasing powers of mind and deeper study, he came back to belief in a personal GOD as a necessity to account for what he saw around him in the universe. The belief in a Divine Saviour followed, and before his death he became a communicant of the Church. The following affecting verses were penned by him:

"Although mine eyes may not have fully seen
Thy great salvation, surely there have been
Enough of sorrow and enough of sight
To show the way from darkness into light;

Enough of sorrow for the heart to cry,—
'Not for myself, nor for my kind, am I!'
Enough of sight for Reason to disclose,
The more I learn, the less my knowledge grows."

One must respect and feel much sympathy for such an honest doubter as this one. But when a scholar commences his work of destruction by taking for his foundation principle that nothing

came from GOD; there is no supernatural; communication between GOD and man is impossible, and therefore could not be; may we not rightly apply to him the words which Jean Ingelow represents Noah as saying to the men of his time:

> "Ye do not *love* your Father,
> Therefore ye would not have it so."

The men who have given up all for Christ's sake do not seem to be troubled with doubts of His presence and power. "My GOD, how tender Thou art!" exclaimed Hannington as he was painfully working his way through forests and across deserts to the interior of Africa. Paton, when alone amongst savages on a hostile island, declared that he had never felt so strongly the comfort and support of Christ's presence as he did there.

The writer of a letter to a young Churchman, whom I have already quoted, says, in answer to his doubts: "Even if we were to allow, which we do not for a moment, that our Blessed Lord had so emptied Himself of His eternal glory as to be liable in His human nature to be mistaken, we know that after He had risen from the dead, and was in His glorified Body no longer subject to human imperfections, He 'opened the understanding' of His Apostles

'that they might understand the things which were written in the law of Moses, and in the Prophets and in the Psalms, concerning' Himself; thus setting His seal to their truth. He also promised to send the Holy Spirit, who would bring all things to their remembrance, and guard them from mistakes in witnessing to the truth."

Can one hesitate as to where they should place their confidence? The criticism of the Holy Scriptures is the product of an irreverent age, and its authors are responsible for the destruction of faith and its results in many a heart and life. "Now what have you got left?" said a philosopher, after overturning, as he thought, all upon which an ignorant man had rested his faith. "Sire, the stars," answered the peasant. And there is always that left which is unanswerable.

In every age, when the Word of GOD has been attacked, GOD has raised up defenders of the Faith. One of the most profound thinkers and keen observers of our own time, the Hon. Mr. Gladstone, entitled, by his station, his great age, and noble character, to our confidence and respect, has taken up his pen in defence of the Creation Story given in the first and second chapters of the Book of Genesis. It has been stated by objectors as in contradic-

tion with the laws and facts of nature, and that attempts to reconcile them are useless and irrational; thus seeking to close the question. He declares that the question is *not* closed, and that their condemnation is premature, and not well founded. He gives as his opinion that too much has been conceded to the scientist in our day. And then he proceeds with powerful arguments for the truth and beauty of the Divine Revelation. "A clergyman in Denver, Col., in order to remove the skepticism of a young man who agreed to accept Gladstone's belief, wrote to the latter on the subject, and although the inquiry was made at the height of the election excitement, the 'Grand Old Man' sent this reply, in his own handwriting: 'All I write, and all I think, and all I hope, is based upon the divinity of our Lord, the one central hope of our poor, wayward race.'"

Some years ago, when critical investigations were at their height, several English Bishops issued a statement subscribed with their names, declaring their undiminished reverence for and belief in the inspiration of the Bible, and condemning the work of its dissection. Within the last few years researches in eastern lands have resulted in discoveries which throw additional light upon, and confirm the truth of the Holy Scriptures, just at the time when such

proofs are needed. Thus GOD vindicates the truth of His Words, and confirms our faith.

Let us now go back for a few minutes to the records of primitive faith and devotion. Lent was the special season for inculcating repentance and faith. It is thought that the first day of Lent received its name from penitents (who had been excommunicated and desired to do penance) appearing in the Church clothed in sackcloth, and with ashes on their heads. Also it was a time for instructing those who were to be baptized, in the rudiments of the Faith. The selections which will close our thoughts on this subject are from writers of the first and second centuries.

From the first Epistle of Clement, written probably about A.D. 97 (Phil. iv. 3): "These things, beloved, we write unto you, not merely to admonish you of your duty, but to remind ourselves. For we are struggling on the same arena, and the same conflict is assigned to both of us. Wherefore let us give up vain and fruitless cares, and approach to the glorious rule of our holy calling. Let us look steadfastly to the Blood of Christ, and see how precious that Blood is to GOD, which, having been shed for our salvation, has set the grace of repentance before the whole world. Let us turn to every age that has passed, and learn that from generation to

generation the Lord has granted a place of repentance to all such as would be converted to Him. He says, 'If ye turn to Me with your whole hearts and say, Father, I will listen to you as to a holy people.' Desiring, therefore, that all His beloved should be partakers of repentance, He has established these declarations. Wherefore let us yield obedience to His excellent and glorious will; and imploring His mercy and loving-kindness, while we forsake all fruitless labours, and strife, and envy, which lead to death, let us turn and have recourse to His compassions."

From the Epistle of S. Polycarp to the Philippians, written about A.D. 150:

"The strong root of your faith, spoken of in days long gone by, endureth even until now, and bringeth forth fruit to our Lord Jesus Christ. The blessed and glorified Paul wrote you a letter, which, if you carefully study, you will find to be the means of building you up in that faith which has been given you. Stand fast, therefore, in these things, and follow the example of the Lord, being firm and unchangeable in the faith, loving the brotherhood, being attached to one another, joined together in the truth, exhibiting the meekness of the Lord in your intercourse with one another, and despising no one."

IV.

Christian Character.

"There are, in this loud, stunning tide
Of human care and crime,
With whom the melodies abide
Of the everlasting chime;
Who carry music in their heart,
Through dusky lane and wrangling mart;
Plying their daily task with busier feet,
Because their secret souls a holy strain repeat." *

FAITH which works by love is a living faith, and shows itself in the growth of Christian character. An artist once thought that he would produce a more perfect work of art than had ever before been seen, by copying the arm of one beauty, the hand of another, the foot of a third, the eyes, the lips, the chin of others, and thus create an exquisite creature which should ravish all hearts. But he found to his dismay that his *combination* was positively ugly. In like manner, many persons make a patchwork of character, by attempting to imitate virtues which attract them in others, and then find that

* Keble.

they have somehow made a mistake. The reason of this is, that genuine Christian character is a growth. In nature GOD shows us a type of ourselves in the growing plant which slowly develops from the seed into the tender shoot with hidden rootlets; then one little leaf after another appears until the bud forms, which in time will develop into the flower, beautiful and fragrant, and having within itself the power to bring forth other lives as lovely as itself. Our Blessed Lord seems to call our attention to this type when He says that "Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these" blossoms. The good man in Holy Scripture is often likened to a tree which, by slow development, attains a strength sufficient to withstand the fury of opposing elements, and becomes a shelter from storm and heat, and the dispenser of many blessings. Such a tree I remember, which did not show its leafage as early as others in its neighbourhood, but excelled them all; a young oak, often remarked upon with pleasure on account of its symmetry, its strength, and beautiful foliage, calling to mind the words of the Psalm: "He shall be like a tree . . . that will bring forth his fruit in due season." In the same Book of Psalms, the children of GOD'S servants are spoken of as "olive plants;" "our sons, as plants grown up in their youth."

"The saints above are stars in Heaven:
What are the saints on earth?
Like trees they stand whom GOD has given,
Our Eden's happy birth.

"Faith is their fixed unswerving root,
Hope their unfading flower,
Fair deeds of Charity their fruit,
The glory of their bower." *

Bishop Coxe compares woman to a tree, in the following beautiful lines:

"O woman is a tender tree!
The hand must gentle be that rears
Through storm and sunshine, patiently,
That plant of grace, of smiles and tears.

"Let her that waters, at the font,
Life's earliest blossoms, have the care;
And where the garden's Lord is wont
To walk His round—Oh keep her there.

"E'en like the first warm sun of May,
Or, to the daisy, April showers,
Her earliest lesson—how to pray,
Clothes the young soul with fragrant flowers.

"Then, planted by the altar's pale,
The Church, with catechising art,
Trains to the chancel's trellised rail
The wandering tendrils of the heart." †

A tree or plant to grow into strength and beauty must be firmly rooted. It is of vital importance what a person believes, because faith

* Keble. † "Christian Ballads."

is the root of the Christian; and unless the roots take deep and firm hold of the soil, we know that the plant will be of feeble and sickly growth.

Look at the superstitious fears, the lack of compassion, the crime which is considered meritorious, in the life of a heathen, all of which spring from a false faith; think of the pride and self-will and ingratitude which a life in a Christian land without faith in Christ must exhibit. Everyone must have some kind of a creed, notwithstanding statements to the contrary, for our acts are the result of our opinions.

From the roots the sap ascends through the branches into each little twig; so the life of Christ, from a true faith in Him, quickens the soul in every part. Without His life within us we are spiritually dead, however great an effort may be made to show the fruits of a living tree. The Divine Gardener rejoices in His garden; He prunes His trees, and for some He pleads that they may be spared a little longer, in order that they may bring forth fruit. There are many different kinds of trees, of equally beautiful and healthy growth, and an infinite variety of flowers. We can hardly say which is the loveliest, the fair and stately lily, the blushing rose, the lowly, fragrant violet, the typical passion flower, the wax-like cactus, they are so

different in character. And in this diversity they symbolize our individuality. Our beauty of character does not consist in each striving to be like a lily or a rose, but in each so using the gifts which GOD has given us, in the place where He has planted us, that we may glorify Him in becoming what He wishes *us* to be. As no two faces are exactly alike, so neither are characters. Where one is naturally silent, thoughtful, and studious, with a fondness for being alone, another is happiest when surrounded by friends, and at his best when working with others. One is easily touched by pity for any kind of distress, tender and skilful in ministering to the sick; another specially loves to care for and teach little children. There is the artist nature, delighting in all beauty of form and color, and finding the greatest happiness in reproducing it on canvas; and there, again, one whose love of art shows itself in elaborate designs executed with the needle. Here we find the good fairy of neatness and order, the careful housekeeper, thrifty and economical. One is fond of out-of-door life, hardy and without fear; another is very timid, but trustful and conscientious. There we see the organizer; here the persevering plodder, willing to carry out the other's plans. And these opposites seem often attracted to each other. We should

indeed show *all* virtues in some degree, but each has his or her characteristic trait or gift, which marks their individuality, and determines their vocation. *Christian* character means that these distinguishing traits are consecrated to Christ's service. Are ours? If we spend much time over some pursuit, cultivate some gift with care, feeling that we can do our best in that special direction, do we seek first of all for GOD'S blessing upon it, and offer the first fruits, something of the best that we can do, to His service? If this were so, should we not have a large number who could play the organ and sing at week-day Services, trim the Church for festivals, and keep it in beautiful order, using their skill in needle-work to enrich His Sanctuary, and helping their Rector in every other department of Church work? Would not the Church be well filled, even at week-day Services; and on Sundays would anything keep us away from the morning and evening worship, but the greatest necessity? We can each give something to the Church of GOD which it would not have without our efforts.

But how can we know that we are growing?

"Would'st thou the life of souls discern?
Nor human wisdom nor divine
Helps thee by aught beside to learn;
Love is life's only sign.

The spring of the regenerate heart,
The pulse, the glow of every part,
Is the true love of Christ our Lord,
As man embraced, as GOD adored." *

Love is used here in its large sense, as S. Paul uses it in his beautiful description of charity, which is pure, sincere, humble, and contented, full of trust and hope toward GOD; modest, gentle, kind, unselfish, patient, forgiving toward men; an array of many virtues in one. Let us take the first cluster of Christian graces, separate and examine them more closely. Truth or sincerity is the virtue upon which all others rest, and if that is lacking, all is worthless; an appearance of life and beauty which will not endure any searching test. Our Lord had loving kindness for every sinner, excepting those who were insincere. To those He said, "Woe unto you, hypocrites!" As this virtue is so very important, we ought to guard against any approach to untruth. Perhaps the most common is by exaggeration. It makes a story so much brighter to add a little to it. It often seems as if we could not impress another with the pleasure and astonishment which we have felt, without extravagant expressions. But our Lord says, "Let your yea *be* yea, and your nay, nay; for whatsoever is more than these, cometh

* Keble.

of evil." That is, let your words be sincere; say what you mean. One great evil of the Roman Church is the allowance of falsehood if it is intended to serve a good purpose. "Let us do evil that good may come." Simplicity or naturalness is a part of sincerity, a childlike spirit that does not strive for effect nor seek applause. Purity is an essential of Christian character, and, oh! how sacredly we should guard our innocence of evil. "Keep thy heart with all diligence," says the wise man; and the avenues to it are through the eye and ear. Let us turn quickly from the sight of anything which may suggest impure thoughts; sometimes these are on bills posted up in our streets, sometimes in books and papers. If they are of a doubtful character, they should never be read. The unclean literature which abounds is one of the great evils of our day, which those who desire the welfare of the young are striving to remedy. The stain left by such contamination sinks deep, and no unaided effort of ours can remove it. The Blood of Christ can alone wash it out and obliterate the remembrance.

A young girl who had resolved never again to read anything that was impure, found, to her dismay, that she could not eradicate from her mind the remembrance of what she *had* read; but repeating, over and over, "Jesus Christ my

Saviour,'' put the evil fancies to flight. Ancient stories and legends contain many allusions to the fear felt by Satan on hearing the name of Christ. Certainly Satan would soon cease to tempt persons where the only effect would be to turn their minds to Christ as their refuge. In the Holy Communion we receive from Him fresh supplies of purity to counteract any defilement which we may have contracted. The daily papers have much in them which is unfit to be read, chiefly the details of horrible crimes, which cannot but be an injury to our minds and hearts. An excellent lady, who was the principal of a girls' school, used to advise her pupils to read only the telegraph reports, and things of that nature. Modesty is the outward part of purity; the desire not to be conspicuous, not to attract attention; and it is the connecting link between that virtue and humility, for it partakes of both.

Ancient Christian writers used to exhort their women to be diligent and modest, adorning the home, but careful not to attract general attention when abroad. They are bidden to study the character of the virtuous woman given in the thirty-first chapter of Proverbs; and it is a good example for our own imitation. Humility is often called the greatest of Christian virtues, perhaps because it is so difficult of attainment.

Also, because one may practise the virtue of diligence, of benevolence, too, without being a Christian; if the motive be the service of Christ, they become Christian virtues. But humility can have only one motive, the honour of GOD by submission to Him. Pride would exalt ourselves and our own will; humility would refer to GOD in everything. A prayerful spirit goes with humility, for if we are lowly in heart, we shall not depend upon ourselves, but upon GOD, and shall go to Him with our small needs as well as large ones, and so form the habit of prayer, of realizing GOD'S Presence and power to help us. This brings in trustfulness and cheerful contentment as a natural result. We may not expect to receive the blessings which we ask for if we cannot trust the Fatherly goodness which has promised all things. And we cannot be at peace if we are constantly fearing that some harm may happen to us. The Catechism teaches that it is our Christian duty "to put our whole trust in Him." If we could only do that, we should be happy amid all "the changes and chances of this mortal life." Our fears of being alone, of thunder-storms, of burglars, and many other things, would disappear forever if we were convinced that GOD is constantly guarding and defending us. We read in our Bible and Prayer

Book a great deal about trust in GOD; but do we try to put it into practice in our daily lives? And if we do not thus trust in Him, what right have we to expect that He will continue to care for us in each event of our lives? "The ship has sprung a leak, and we shall all be drowned," said a passenger to the captain's child, who was in her berth for the night. "Is father on deck?" was her question, and receiving that assurance, she said, "Then it's all right," and was soon fast asleep. Have we not as much reason to trust our Heavenly Father? "Better hath He been for years, than our fears." With trust is cheerful contentment, bearing a thankful heart which always sees the sunny side, and counts up blessings, and takes the seeming evil as a blessing in disguise.

"Some murmur when their sky is clear
And wholly bright to view,
If one small speck of dark appear
In their great heaven of blue;
And some with thankful love are filled,
If, streaming from the light,
One ray of GOD's good mercy gild
The darkness of their night.

"In palaces are hearts that ask,
In discontent and pride,
Why life is such a thankless task,
And all good things denied;

And hearts in poorest huts admire
How Love has in their aid,—
Love that not ever seemed to tire,—
Such rich provision made." *

Perhaps we do not think of joy as a Christian duty, yet it is mentioned as one of the fruits of the Spirit.

"It is a comely fashion to be glad,—
Joy is the grace we say to GOD."

How much GOD has given us to make our stay here happy, although it is but for a few short years! If we were shut into a dungeon and doomed to work a treadmill, with just enough to sustain life, the promise of an eternity of freedom and joy beyond might well make us esteem this a light affliction; but GOD pours lavishly upon all His creation His good gifts, that we may know His loving-kindness toward us.

"Thou that hast given so much to me,
Give one thing more, a grateful heart.

"Not thankful when it pleaseth me;
As if Thy blessings had spare days:
But such a heart, whose pulse may be
Thy praise." †

Let us now look at the second cluster of graces, which grow out of the love of GOD, and more

* Trench. † Herbert.

especially affect our fellow creatures. There is meekness or patience toward others, which bears rather than avenges a wrong, now little esteemed by some as too old-fashioned a virtue to suit their notions. I was once telling an acquaintance of the lovely Christian character of a laundress who made a fine art of all her hard work by doing it so beautifully. I spoke of her having borne patiently the heavier burden of a lazy husband, rather than fret or scold at him, thus making her home an abode of peace for her children, instead of discord. My hearer interrupted me with, "I don't think that *was* a Christian virtue!" Our Lord has a blessing for the meek, and S. Peter tells us that the fairest ornament a woman can wear is "a meek and quiet spirit, which is, in the sight of GOD, of great price." Peace is a fruit of the Spirit; it is also a blessed thing to be a peacemaker; to help to heal the wounds, unwind the tangles, and smooth the friction of life. Brotherly kindness (*we* might call it sisterly kindness) is ever seeking the opportunity to help, comfort, and cheer another who may be a stranger, lonely, in difficulty or trouble. [How this virtue, in particular, would add to the beauty of our Band of Girls, and make the motto of ready *help*, a *hope* that always sees the best in others, a *harmony* which is the result of love, a very real

thing. It is good to use our own little prayer at each Meeting, and our Lord's Prayer, which reminds us that we are all members of one Family.] The early disciples were sometimes called doves, from their gentle and loving character. Perhaps a common suffering, and the feeling that Heaven was so near at hand, endeared them to each other.

We may have been thinking, during this talk, that the leading woman of our own day, and the general idea of the woman of the future, does not seem to represent this class of virtues. She is rather one who wishes to make her mark and attract the notice of the public. However that may be, we may well take the Blessed Virgin Mary as our example of Christian womanhood, since she was chosen of GOD for the greatest honour ever bestowed upon woman.

Our Lord's Sermon on the Mount refers to what we *are* rather than what we *do*, and of the manner in which we work rather than of its amount. The growing plant of Christian character must naturally bear the fruit of good words and works. It is "from the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." The good fruit of the lips will be kindness and wisdom. But the little member which S. James says is like a rudder and can turn about the whole body, he also reminds us must be bridled and under our control.

"A young man once went to an aged saint, and asked him for a rule to help him in spiritual living. The old man read aloud the first verse of the thirty-ninth Psalm: 'I will take heed to my ways that I offend not with my tongue.' 'Stop,' cried the young man, 'when I have learned that, I will come for other rules.' At the end of six months, and then at the end of a year, he declared that he had not yet learned this lesson. At the end of five years he said that he did not need any other rule, for having become master of his tongue, he had obtained control over his whole nature." *

It was thought by the ancients that the heart and tongue were connected by one string, and, as one of them observes, "the working is like that of a clock; when the wheels go around, the hammer will strike." Certainly words are often a vent for feelings of irritation, dislike, and disapprobation of others. "When we are going to tell anything to the discredit of others," was a mother's advice, "let us see if it will pass through three sieves: first, is it true? second, is it useful? third, is it kind?" We may well pause over the last question. "If you think that others are talking *you* over, you feel as if you were suffering martyrdom;" and would you like to have a foolish or unkind

* Bishop A. C. A. Hall, on Self-Discipline.

speech of your own repeated to another? It was the advice of a beloved Pastor, "Choose *things* rather than *people*, as subjects for conversation." The fruit of our lips is to give thanks to GOD'S Name; and "a word" of cheer, of sympathy, of counsel, "spoken in due season, how good is it!"

The fruit of good works includes the every-day work of our lives. A Christian will do his or her work well and thoroughly, aiming "in trifles, to reach perfection, which is no trifle." "Not *what*, but *how*," is a pithy little rule, which may help one not to slight sewing, housework, or other duties, however distasteful they may seem. A slave girl was asked by her master what good it had done her to become a Christian. "I dunno, Massa, but now I sweeps under the mats," was the answer.

"All may of Thee partake;
Nothing can be so mean,
Which with this tincture, 'for Thy sake,'
Will not grow bright and clean.

"A servant, with this clause
Makes drudgery divine;
Who sweeps a room as for Thy laws
Makes that and the action fine."*

A Christian character will make room for some share in the work of Christ's Church, and

*Herbert.

give it the first place; for we are a part of this Family, and Christ has committed to each individual member the work of leavening society with the knowledge and love of Him.

We are perhaps interested in Associations which we think may be for our own welfare or that of others; but we must remember that any work which is Christian in spirit is the result of the presence and influence of Christ's Church in the world. I mean that if He had not established *It*, we should not have had any of the blessings of Christianity. Our Bible is a gift which we have received from the Church. If we are to do the truest good to humanity it must be by working with Christ in His Church. They cannot be divided, for He is the Head, and She is His Body. Whatever Her imperfections may be here, She *shall* be "without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing." And the "Trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord," "shall flourish in the courts of the House of our GOD" in the Heavenly Jerusalem, "that He may be glorified."

V.

The Character of Christ.

WE have often noticed with pleasure how a prism of cut glass will break the light into all the tints of the rainbow. Each lovely color represents the predominant virtue in the character of the Christian. In one it is golden hope; in another, the violet tint of humility; in a third, the red of courage. But in the character of Christ, all the lovely hues are blended into the pure light; every virtue so perfectly developed that the color of each is again absorbed into its source.

> "As every lovely hue is light,
> So every grace is love."

If we study the Beatitudes which begin Christ's Sermon on the Mount, we find that He is the perfect example of each blessed trait. S. Paul's description of charity is the description of the character of Christ. Christ is our Example as well as our Atonement. And first, He is our Pattern of humility. "He humbled Himself" from a glory beyond our power to conceive, to become a helpless Infant in His

mother's arms, dependent upon her to supply all His human needs. In the one incident recorded of His youth in Holy Scripture, we have an example of humility in His subjection to the authority of His earthly parents. As He grew to man's estate, He showed humility in His daily toil for the support of His then widowed mother. A writer * on this subject says, "Jesus, the Son of GOD, working as a carpenter in the little village of Nazareth! There were no great people living about there, no one who could give Him a large order. His work lay among the poor, and would consist more in mending and repairing than in making. The repairing of the rough ploughs with which they tilled the ground, fitting new handles to spades and hoes, mending broken chairs and tables, and perhaps repairing a wagon,—this would be His best work, unless some repairs were needed in the village synagogue or school, or rough timber were wanted for the roof of some cottage. Think of the work of Jesus! How perfect it must have been,—no pains, no trouble spared! When His work was badly paid, it was done just as well; when He worked for the poorest and lowest of the people, there was no difference in the quality of His work. In it all was the perfection of humility. For us

* Wilson : "Readings on Humility."

He has hallowed work and made it a sacred thing; to work with our hands is humbling, but not degrading. In every parish there are so many odd jobs to be done, little things that will never bring us any credit; and when we try to do them quite perfectly, simply for the sake of Jesus Christ, then we are sharing His humility."

The same writer gives this remarkable contrast of His humility during His public Ministry as a Teacher, to the best of heathen philosophers.

"Once a rich young man came to Socrates, and asked how much it would cost to attend his lectures on philosophy. Socrates named a large sum as the price of his lectures. Now the philosophers had a saying amongst themselves that if any one was not a philosopher he was a slave, that is, a slave to himself; and so when the rich young man answered that the price of his lectures was ridiculously high, and that he could buy a slave for less, Socrates replied, 'Buy him, and you will then have two.' When we turn to Jesus Christ, what a marvellous change we see! A rich young man ran to Him, and kneeled down before Him, and said, 'Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?' With what humility did our Lord endeavour to win this young man! In the pride of his

wealth, he had done much; he had tried to keep the Commandments, and thought he had done so; but our Lord shewed him that there was one that he had not kept,—he was covetous, he loved his money and all that it meant to him. How gently and how lovingly our Lord humbled Himself to the level of this rich young man, and tried to wean him from his love of wealth. 'Thou shalt have treasure in Heaven; come, take up thy cross, and follow Me.'"

As our Sacrifice Christ "humbled Himself—even" to "the death of the Cross." And yet He was an example of courage. "He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem," although He knew all that He should suffer there from the hatred of the rulers of His nation. And His moral courage was such that He never hesitated to speak the most distasteful truths to others, when it was necessary for the honour of His Father or the benefit of men.

We read that in His childhood "He increased in favour with man," as well as with GOD; undoubtedly it was because He showed so much sympathy, friendliness, and compassion,—in a word, a pure, unselfish love for all. One of Raphael's lovely paintings represents Him as an Infant standing by His mother's knee, and putting out His little hand to protect a bird which an older child was handling roughly.

The author of "Ben-Hur" gives a touching little incident, possibly gleaned from some legend, of the Child Christ's pity for and loving treatment of a Jewish captive. "A youth who came up with Joseph, but had stood behind him unobserved, laid down an axe he had been carrying, and going to the great stone standing by the well, took from it a pitcher of water. The action was so quiet that, before the guard could interfere, had they been disposed to do so, he was stooping over the prisoner, and offering him drink. The hand laid kindly upon his shoulder awoke the unfortunate Judah, and, looking up, he saw a face he never forgot,—the face of a boy about his own age, shaded by locks of yellowish bright chestnut hair; a face lighted by dark blue eyes, at the time so soft, so appealing, so full of love and holy purpose, that they had all the power of command and will. The spirit of the Jew, hardened though it was by days and nights of suffering, and so embittered by wrong that its dreams of revenge took in all the world, melted under the stranger's look, and became as a child's. He put his lips to the pitcher and drank long and deep. Not a word was said to him, nor did he say a word. When the draught was finished, the hand that had been resting upon the sufferer's shoulder was placed upon his head, and stayed

there in the dusty locks time enough to say a blessing; the stranger then returned the pitcher to its place on the stone, and, taking his axe again, went back to the Rabbi Joseph. All eyes went with him, the decurion's as well as those of the villagers. This was the end of the scene at the well. When the men had drunk, and the horses, the march was resumed. But the temper of the decurion was not as it had been; he himself raised the prisoner from the dust, and helped him on a horse, behind a soldier. The Nazarenes went to their houses,—among them Rabbi Joseph and his apprentice." During His public Ministry, we have the Gospel record of that Life which was one continuous act of mercy and disinterested love. When He became wearied by His unceasing ministries to those in need, and seeking rest in a desert place, was still followed by the multitude, He was not moved with impatience, but with compassion, toward them.

Although His days were so filled with the work of "going about doing good," He was never too busy nor wearied to pray and meditate, passing whole nights in communion with His Father on the mountain-tops, which are forever sacred places from the use which He made of them. We know that He was constantly in the Synagogues, taking part in the worship, and

delighting to be in the Temple, His Father's House; also indignantly driving out those who would profane it by secular employments. How often we see people neglect all worship, and say in excuse: "If I am Christlike in my life, I am sure that my duty is fulfilled." But such an answer will not be given by one who studies the record of that Life.

It is a wonderful ideal which Hoffman has painted of the youthful Christ among the doctors. The expression of sweetness and humility, of love, and yet of a glowing zeal, in the beautiful Face, holds one spellbound. He longed then to be about His Father's work, and throughout His earthly life His meat and drink was to do the will of Him that sent Him.

Of all other virtues Christ is the perfect example. As He *is* love, so He *is* truth. To quote the words of an eloquent French writer:* "Jesus Christ was sincerity itself, and the invincible charm which is felt in contemplating and in listening to Him, comes from the inmost brightness of His physiognomy, by which He is seen from without wholly as He is. The Gospel shows us in the character of Jesus Christ a sublime intelligence; a chaste and ineffable tenderness of heart; a will absolutely certain of Himself."

* Lacordaire.

A writer of an opposite school of thought says:

"Men, women, and children, all who were natural, unconventional, simple in love and powerful in faith, ran to Him as a child to its mother. They felt the beauty of character which was born of sensibility to human feeling and spiritual wants, and they were bound to Him forever." *

If we admire and reverence another for some noble act, some exalted virtue, Christ shows the same virtue in *perfection*. *He* is the incomparable hero. "He is *altogether* lovely." How poets will celebrate a great deed, extol a noble character, and our own hearts thrill with delight and admiration as we read or hear the eulogy! But how few are fired with the desire to give praise and glory to the One who surpasses *all* others.

"Why are not sonnets made of Thee? and lays
Upon Thine altar burnt? Cannot Thy love
Heighten a spirit to sound out Thy praise—
Cannot Thy Dove
Outstrip their Cupid easily in flight?
Why doth that fire, which by Thy power and might
Each breast does feel, no braver fuel choose
Than that which, one day, worms may chance refuse?
Sure, Lord, there is enough in Thee to dry
Oceans of ink; for as the deluge did

* Stopford A. Brooke.

Cover the earth, so doth Thy Majesty:
Each cloud distils Thy praise, and doth forbid
Poets to turn it to another use.
Roses and lilies speak Thee; and to make
A pair of cheeks of them, is Thy abuse.
Why should I women's eyes for crystal take?
Such poor invention burns in their low mind
Whose fire is wild, and doth not upward go
To praise."*

We know, perhaps, what we ourselves are capable of; what *we* could do or endure for the sake of one whom we love, or from pity for one in extreme distress. Perhaps we sometimes feel that we must beseech GOD before He will feel as much compassion or yearning affection as that which animates our own hearts. Yet our *intensest* feeling is but a *faint* reflection of His.

"Would I to save my dear child dutiful,
Dare the white breakers on a storm-rent shore?
Ay, truly, Thou all good, all beautiful,
Truly I would,—then truly Thou would'st more.

"Would I for my poor son, who desolate
After long sinning, sued without my door
For pardon, open it? Ay, fortunate
To hear such prayer, I would,—Lord, Thou would'st more.

"Would I for e'en the stranger's weariness
And want, divide, albeit 'twere scant, my store?
Ay, and mine enemy, sick, shelterless,
Dying, I would attend,—O Lord, Thou more.

* Herbert.

"In dust and ashes my long infamy
Of unbelief I rue. My love before
Thy love I set: my heart's discovery
Is sweet,—whate'er I would, Thou would'st more.

"I was Thy shelterless, sick enemy,
And Thou didst die for me, yet heretofore
I have fear'd; now learn I love's supremacy,—
Whate'er is known of love, Thou lovest more." *

Holy Scripture, throughout which, from Genesis to Revelation, the Character of Christ is inwoven like a thread of gold, now hidden, now appearing in its rich texture, has many names for our Blessed Lord to describe the many-sidedness of His Character. He is the Rock, the Foundation, and the Corner-stone; the Vine, the Root, and the Branch; the Rose and the Lily; the Fountain and the Bread; the Sun and the Shield; the Door, the Way, the Refuge; the Lamb, and the Shepherd; the Physician, the Friend, the Husband; the Prophet, Priest, and King. And these are not all that might be given.

The contemplation of a model of perfect beauty and excellence might only depress us the more with the feeling of our own imperfection, and the hopelessness of attaining to such an ideal, were it not for the blessed fact that this is "the Lord *our Righteousness*." All this glorious

* Jean Ingelow.

excellence of character is ours, to supply our lack, to cover our defects. This is our "justification by faith." May we not with the poet think of Him as saying to each one of us:

"O heart I made, a Heart beats here!
Face My hands fashioned, see it in Myself.
Thou hast no power, nor may'st conceive of Mine;
But love I gave thee, with Myself to love,
And thou must love Me, who have died for thee."*

Does not this wondrous love of our Redeemer "constrain us" to give Him all of which our poor hearts are capable?

This precious season of Lent gives us the opportunity to withdraw somewhat from the affairs of this world, and to think on these things. Its quiet days are full of comfort and strength for our spiritual nature. The development of Christian character will progress more rapidly under these favorable circumstances. New shoots will appear, to become fruit-bearing branches in after years. And the tree will be more firmly rooted, better able to withstand the chilling blasts of adversity; and its foliage will still be kept green by the dews of the Spirit, in the dry and parching air of worldly prosperity.

Our earthly life is a Lenten Season,—a way shadowed by cares and trials, yet leading to the

* Browning.

light. It is fit that we should "watch and pray," that when the radiance of the eternal Easter shall break upon our transported vision, we may "see" our Saviour's "Face," and "be satisfied with His likeness."

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